

# Encouraging Fathers & Male Role Models' Engagement in Literacy

Fathers and father figures play a powerful role in children's literacy development. Whether you're reading a favorite bedtime story, talking during a walk, telling family stories, or exploring a child's interests together, these everyday moments help build language, confidence, and a lifelong love of reading.

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## Follow these tips to ensure your classroom is welcoming to father figures:

### **Use inclusive language.**

Avoid reinforcing stereotypes through your choice of language. For example, instead of saying "Get your mom to sign this" to a child say, "Have an adult in your family sign this." When communicating with families, intentionally include all caregivers and avoid assuming who is most involved in a child's education. Whenever possible, use family-preferred names, pronouns, and communication methods.

### **See themselves in the literature.**

Build a classroom library collection that represents all different types of families. Include books that reflect a wide variety of family structures, cultures, languages, abilities, and caregiving relationships. Seeing themselves and others in books helps children develop a sense of belonging while building empathy and understanding. Be sure to include books that have fathers or other male role models as a main character. For book recommendations, please visit RIF's [Celebrating Fathers](#) on Literacy Central.

### **Use inclusive imagery.**

Review classroom displays, school websites, newsletters, and family communications regularly to ensure fathers, grandfathers, uncles, foster parents, military caregivers, and other trusted adults are visibly represented.

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## **Reduce barriers to participation.**

Ask fathers and other caregivers how they prefer to be involved rather than assuming what works best. Offer flexible meeting times, virtual options, and multiple opportunities to participate. Gather feedback regularly and use it to improve family engagement efforts.

## **Make fathers feel included by utilizing their skills and talents.**

Invite fathers and father figures to share their interests, careers, hobbies, cultural traditions, life experiences, or talents. Whether reading aloud, leading a STEM activity, sharing a family tradition, coaching a game, or talking about their work, every contribution helps children see learning as a shared community effort.

## **Foster meaningful relationship.**

Small actions can help fathers and father figures feel welcomed. Learn and use their names, greet them during arrival and dismissal, invite them into conversations about their child's strengths, and celebrate their involvement throughout the year—not just during Father's Day or special events. Building trusting relationships encourages ongoing engagement.

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### **Sources:**

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